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C.I.A. Director, Praised Briefly, Again Attacked

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 12 — Less than a year after he was criticized for having failed to anticipate the revolution in Iran, Adm. Stansfield Turner, the strong-willed Director of Central Intelligence, is again coming under attack.

In a handwritten note to Mr. Turner last November, President Carter said he was "dissatisfied with the quality of political intelligence" on volatile trouble spots, such as the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Officials report that, since receiving the Carter memorandum, Mr. Turner, together with other high-level intelligence aides, has started an extensive program to improve political reporting from sensitive regions.

According to both C.I.A. and White House officials, the program has begun to pay off, and policy makers praise Mr. Turner for the agency's performance during crises earlier this year in Nicaragua and Southeast Asia.

All the same, the 55-year-old retired admiral continues to generate controversy. The disclosure that a Soviet combat brigade has been in Cuba for some time has led to allegations that Mr. Turner, during debates among intelligence officials this summer, played down evidence of growing Soviet-Cuban military ties.

Morale Problems Reported

Within the intelligence agencies, meanwhile, the recent departure of two of Mr. Turner's chief deputies has cast doubt on whether his efforts to reorganize and streamline the C.I.A. are succeeding. At the same time, Mr. Turner's continuing frictions with ranking aides in the White House and other parts of the Government are said to reflect a general feeling that the C.I.A. chief has been too eager to enter policy debates.

Mr. Turner has been at the center of controversy almost from the moment he took command of the C.I.A. in February 1977. While his efforts to centralize authority within the intelligence community reportedly angered officials in the White House and the Pentagon, his attempts to shake up the bureaucratic routine within the agency itself are said to have led to severe morale problems.

For the most part, Mr. Turner has brushed off these complaints. In a recent interview, he said that, despite a new spate of criticism, "I have never felt better." He called the morale problem within the agency "insignificant."

An area where foreign-policy officials said Mr. Turner deserved credit was the debate in the Senate over the new Soviet-American strategic arms treaty. Although Mr. Turner caused the White House great anxiety earlier this summer by refusing to take a public position on whether the accord could be adequately verified, he is said to have done an effective job at closed hearings before the Senate Intelligence Committee in July in convincing skeptical senators that the Administration could detect any Soviet cheating.

'Thirst for Publicity' Criticized

Yet many of the same officials who praised Mr. Turner for his performance in the arms treaty debate expressed concern over his approach on other issues. Some C.I.A. aides strongly criticized what one termed Mr. Turner's "thirst for publicity," his policy of making the agency more accessible to the press and his release of some intelligence reports to the public.

Questions are also emerging about whether Mr. Turner's attempt to reorganize the C.I.A.'s intelligence collection and analysis processes are working.

Soon after he took over the agency, Mr. Turner established the National Foreign Assessment Center, headed by Robert R. Bowie, a former Harvard University professor, which was charged with providing overall leadership for the thousands of analysts at the C.I.A. and other governmental agencies. Later in 1977, Mr. Turner created another new organization, the National Intelligence Tasking Office, which was meant to coordinate the intelligence-collection activities of the Government. The tasking office was led by Lieut. Gen. Frank A. Kamm, a retired army officer.

In recent weeks, however, both Mr. Bowie and General Kamm have resigned, amid suggestions that neither the foreign assessment center nor the tasking office had lived up to expectations.

Discussing his efforts to reorganize the intelligence establishment, Mr. Turner conceded he had encountered some problems, but observed that "introducing any new concept into the bureaucracy is hard."

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